



THE CHARLES VIEWER 2007-2008



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Sexy
Vayola Vilma ✓

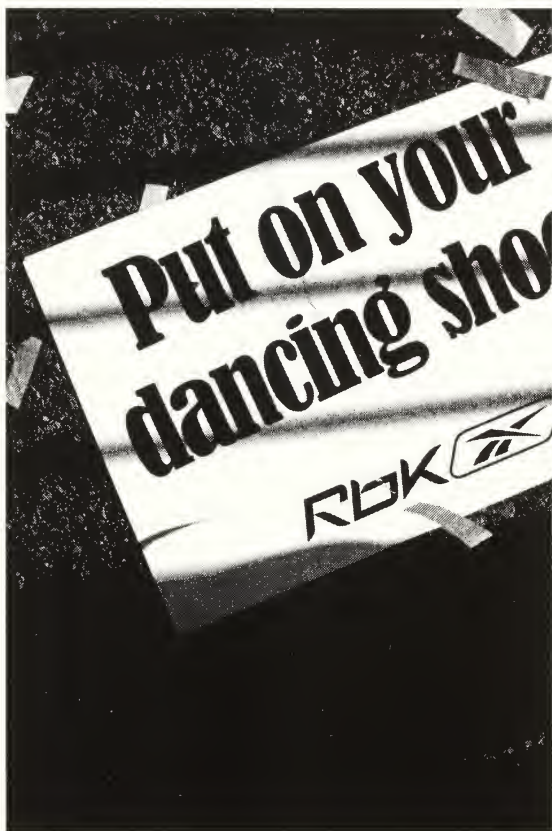
My sister asked me how to be sexy
My sister likes Dora the explorer, braiding my hair, and cake
She thinks the best part about being five is school
She doesn't speak when strangers come to the house
She hides behind my back as if she is shy,
making me laugh when she's sure they're not looking
She likes books the way I do
She likes the feel of your heartbeat against hers especially when she
is tired
She plays alone the way I did when I was her age
She prefers coloring and one woman puppet shows, disregarding
the game to potential
friends
She gets jealous when I hold other babies in my arms
Or seeing my boyfriends hold me in theirs

I want to tell her sexiness is not something taught or practiced
That if you're doing it for boys to like you but feel uncomfortable
on the inside
then you're losing your essence
If you don't love yourself at the end of the day
then there's no way you have enough love for the part of you the
world sees
I'd tell her to hold yourself at the utmost height
because no one is going to be as important to you as you will
I'd tell her to never forget how she likes books and cake
And that that shouldn't have to change when she gets older
I would tell her that sexy is whatever you think it is,
And all that you love

Instead I pat her little fro
Hand her Chika Chika Boom Boom to read to me
Sit her in my lap,
And braid her hair for bed

Simple Words
Jamie Strickland

inspiration when i write
I see my moms eyes
the same eye i still see out of
cause some days I stop
just stop
when i want to resurrect innovative
rivers to escape
the confinement of thought



Photography by Emily Wilson

Back in the Days
Franchisca E. Jean

My heart is pounding
Like children is drowning
He wants his nigger back
But don't know where he at
People is searching
But no one can found him
Behind the branch he hid
That people pass through it
The nigger is quiet
So no one can hear him
But soon make a noise
That people went through it
Found him and whip him
That his scar was so deep
The nigger could not breath
Started to get nervous
The owner got so mad
He left his nigger there
To found somebody else
That listen to him well

Untitled
Zandra Bogar

That day you left
My world turned gray
The sky went dark
As the stars went away

Why did I let you leave?

My eyes were waterfalls
Overflowing with emotion
The second you slammed that door
And walked out of my life.

My heart felt like a piece of paper
That you crumpled and threw on the floor

Did you know you hurt me
Or did you think I wouldn't care?
I may play strong on the outside
But you're killing me inside.

Seeing old pictures brings back the pain
You know, that sinking feeling
In the pit of your stomach
The one that comes every time
I seem to think of you?

I'm sick of feeling like this.

One night not long after you left
I noticed a tiny star
Shining in the midst of the darkness

That's when I knew what I needed to do.

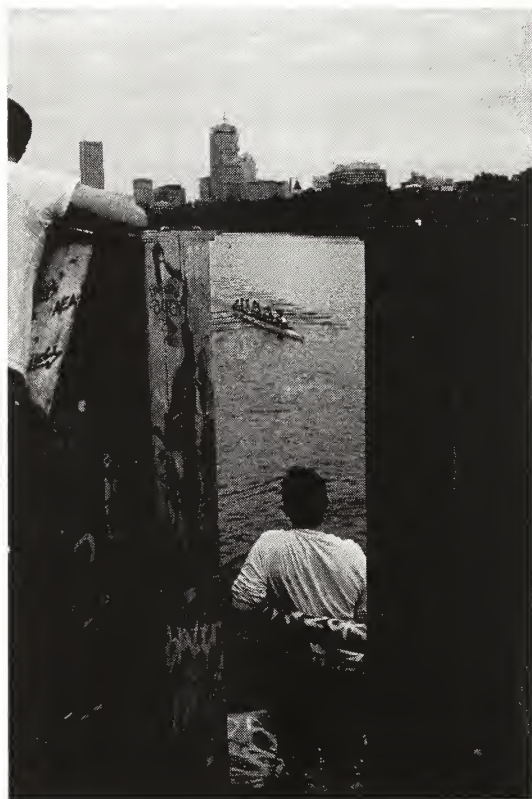
I went back to that place and one by one
picked up the broken pieces of my heart
That were spilled across the floor

I pieced them together and felt free.
Freer than I had ever been.
I finally realized all the things you did to me

My tiny star is finally starting to shine
now that you're out of my life.

Stop-N-Think
Franchisca E. Jean

Everyday I see my people getting killed
Like that disease don't exist
People don't want to get tested
Because they feared they might have it
Little by little someone we loved is dying
by that disease called HIV
Y'all should get tested
Before you end up in a casket
or with a tube in your body
Thinking you should have got tested.



Photography by Emily Wilson

In a Package with Red Ribbons
Vayola Vilma ✓

1

He had dark brown eyes and big bulky arms that swept me up like feathers.
His accent was thick and slow
His lips were soft
His car was nice
And he loved me
So here I am five foot three, short black hair, never looked above my book before
And here he stands
With all that love for me
So when he takes and drapes and uses me till I am no good
He leaves me
“I don’t want you anymore”
I shrug and sigh, then walk away never to return
So the day after he comes to me wanting to touch my body again
Run his hands through my hair and use me all up
Though weak, I refuse, so he pushes, and I run quickly for my life that exists away from
that first love.

2

“I like a woman who’s forward” he says
He likes my back side and the way my breasts fit in his hands
He likes the sound of my voice in the morning when it rains and that I find sex in
everything
He likes the texture of my skin and the way I dance against his body
He likes the way I speak easily with everyone and seem so comfortable where I stand
He likes they way men look at me when he’s by my side
He hates the way men look at me when he’s not there
He hates me cloths, the richness of my voice, and the light in my eyes even when I am
only being nice
He thinks I’m too pretty to be all alone
He thinks my body is a hazard to me and that I should never be around any other man
than him
He thinks I should transfer to an all girls school since I can’t control what lies under my
skirt
He gets angry at me and I flinch when he jumps at me
He cries when I leave
He sends letters sometimes professing how he smells me in the sheets
He misses my body beside him
He wants to know who it is that’s sleeping with me now

3

Over this loud music he says how much he likes my face
How my body seems to fit within itself
"I'd love to break your back" he says sweetly
It didn't matter that he was not very attractive and I had one too many to drink
But I let him lead me to his bed, where I let him break my back
And left in the morning
To never see him again

4

He came over
He came
He left me
With nothing

5

Day one we spent speaking
Day two we spent fucking
We wake up, make love, make love, eat, and make more love in that way
We watch the sun rise and fall, we eat delivery, we watch television
And make love till my toes go numb
We go to the beach, reminisce, have drinks, and make love in-between
He buys me roses, a teddy bear, and my favorite chocolates
He likes large breasts, Kat Williams, and lies
He used these lies when the gifts stop coming
He doesn't come over any more only to use my body
There are no more gifts and trinkets
Just sweat, deep breathing, and the door slam behind him
He comes unannounced, eats, fucks me, and goes
We spend days saying less than 3 words to each other
He never loved me I believe
My body was for the taking
And now that he's got all he needed
My luster has gone

0

I wrapped my body up tight in the package it came in
With bright red ribbons in white wrapping paper
I will put this gift away deep under my bed
In a place where even my cat can't find
I will open it again to the next man who vows not to use my body as a toilet
The man who I share this life of mine with
One to rub my hair, buy me chocolates, and bask in my body
Every now and then

I Believe in Faith
Ayan Osman

I believe in faith.....

I believe in faith for which is a belief in something that's not there, a belief which is being unseen, a faith that holds my heart, a faith that I have love within my country Somalia.

I believe in faith.....

I believe in faith through her old rugged streets and her house that creek. For the innocent blood that is being shredded each day for incurable disease.

I believe in faith.....

I believe in faith for a country that stands alone with no power, no force. For outstanding wars that took many innocent lives away and still occurring until this day.

I believe in faith.....

I believe in faith for her lingering bitter taste. For the burden placed on children's for parents that passed away.



Photography by Emily Wilson

Fast food nation, ghetto nation, democratic nation, wait...I'm confused
Ford Seeman

How many times have we as people found ourselves to be undefined? How many of us would be comfortable being undefined. It sounds like an easy concept but think about it. Everything we do in our lives we try to relate to circumstances familiar to us. How many times have we been able to as a people overcome this? Is it a bad thing or a good thing to be part of the crowd? This question has no simple answer. We as a people need to feel a sense of belonging. There is no getting around it, it's an instinct we harbor as humans. Our right as human beings is, if we wanted, higher learning. We are not driven by instincts. We are above that. This being said, we do have the need to feel comforted. We do this through our global understanding, that we are all one people. When we start to divide ourselves from the global race and feel that other people cannot understand our particular plight that we start to see division. We then begin to segregate ourselves from our fellow man. This is an ongoing struggle. People see each other in colors or race, we divide ourselves by popular opinion, and we make assumptions. What makes the "ghetto" individual that just stepped into the train car more dangerous than the seemingly harmless person sitting next to us? Only what society force feeds us.

When we start to think on an individual basis and not on what would make the whole world a better place we start to lose sight of the larger picture. When we define certain people based on looks or their socio-economic level rather than what they can bring to the table in terms of human decency we cripple ourselves as a society. Everyone can bring something to the table if we let them. In the case of the word ghetto, we think of low-class, dangerous people, if we can even use the term people. How can we expect to change the perception when we do so much as a country to make sure that the rhetoric stays in place? How do we look past all that when the media is so dark and pessimistic? My grandmother has no interaction with people who could be defined as ghetto, so all she knows is what the media force feeds her. Every night on the local news stations in New York you will hear about another shooting in Brooklyn, east New York/Brownsville in particular. You don't read about the Brownsville resident who took it upon themselves to curb violence, or open youth centers. That's not exciting. We want blood and stories that confirm our inner beliefs. Not a story of a Brownsville man who stepped up in a time of crisis. I want to hear about the shooter, the black trigger man so I can call him a savage and thank god that it doesn't affect me. The world is getting too big to just care about oneself anymore. What the next person does WILL affect me, it's a small world after all.

We all want to be part of something bigger. Something better. When I went to public high school in NYC all the cool kids were “madd ghetto.” No one picked on them, they’d jump you. Being ghetto was the cool thing to do. When you step back and look at the larger picture you start to see the division. The little nerdy white kids do all their homework, suck up to the teachers, get picked on or beat up, get their lunch money stolen, then go on to ivy league schools and run the country. But what do they remember about high school? The great connections made? No, they remember Ruffus, that big mean ghetto kid who stole their money or gave them shit. Did Ruffus know any better? Society says yes, but I say no. The only way Ruffus was eating lunch that day was if he “found” the money to eat. It’s a vicious circle, a cycle if you must. Ghetto begets ghetto. The notion of ghetto isn’t going anywhere, cause human ignorance and arrogance isn’t going anywhere. When the going gets tough what do we do in America? We package what we don’t like into neat little packages and say “fuck it, I might not like it but I can sure make a buck off of it.” To me the term ghetto means being stuck between a rock and a hard place and making it work. Maybe not in the right way but in a way that keeps food on the table. I think right now, the U.S. is in a mental ghetto. We have valiant motives which are superseded by our need to make money. What’s money? Is it happiness? No, but in order to reach enlightenment one must be able to survive until they are old enough to reach it. If you’re too busy focusing on money than how can we self-reflect and make ourselves better? We can’t. You need money to get happiness, now all we as a nation have to do is realize that money in and of itself is not happiness. It’s a small and inter-related world, have you done your part to make it better today? Or do you find yourself saying that it’s not your responsibility? If the latter then maybe you need to realize that you’re the reason the world’s so messed up in the first place. When did we lose touch with human kindness? Why is it okay to watch an old lady sway back and forth on the bus and train while you sit in a seat? When did it become un-cool to do something nice? When we decided to become a GHETTO NATION.



Artwork by

Siobhan Haskins

Caste Down But Never Destroyed-
Jamie Strickland

weaker than weak
my light gets bleaker
than sleek images of
black churches
in January's first light
smearing the power of change
taken for granted
in the vain pain
when
attaining the sunshine
within an eye's idea
lessons to be heard
Just like Malcolm said
we cannot hate the roots
and not hate the tree
In, this world that is ours
its time for us to grasp
what is rightfully ours
cause them not me
they not me
because im black like
M-L-K
More like
a dynamic
universal spirit
one of tuskegee airmen
a tear of clown
within smokeys green eyes
and the respect
demanded by arethas expression
like when you hear
and old soul five heartbeats
Or even luther
echoing a house is not a home
from above
like two shots in the dark
Justifying my radical words
the pride of a panther
walking with the heart of panther
cause if nobody else gonna police
my race
then I guess i will
and whatever you are doing
whether you're
reading this

or
hearing these words
for the first time
im going say this with pride
and without an ounce remorse
who is an al sharpton
a jesse jackson
well they're
puppets being strung along
by who knows who
but who knows knows
the truth aint true
when its paid for by television
so its pay per view
a false vision
in a scheme for the truest illusion
of me
a movie
not even depicted by real events
just a meal ticket
to say
we need to unite
when in actuality
what black man
who loves his own
needs protection
from himself
his "brother"
what kinda love
are you living
because that love
you preaching
obviously cant
have any worth
you probably thinking
im less of a man
to discredit these
"great leaders"
and im one to spread disunity
in a community
that barely exists
its funny how when only
a problem arises
a black man is shot
or beat by the police

they are the first on the scene
but when a mother has
her very child ripped
from her very arms
or
struggling to survive
where are they to be found
to give these uplifting words
that are supposedly suppose to manifest
a mind
maybe they are out there on their grind
and i'm wrong
but to me they dont exist



Photography by Emily Wilson

Diamond Love
Gregory Check

The love that I share with my mother
Is a love like no other
With the strength and durability of a diamond
It will last forever
You helped teach me right from wrong
And I still do wrong
But still your love for me
Is never gone
I can't promise I won't make mistakes
I know I'm not perfect
But I'll learn from the ones I make
You brought me into this world
I'm truly thankful for that
When I feel like pressure is closing in
I know you are the support behind my back
And with that
I know there is nothing I can't do
With your love and support
It's only a matter of time before my dreams come true



Artwork by Siobhan Haskins

The Middles
Monique Ryan

Ever since my grandmother was a little girl, she has been escaping to her favorite little cottage located in Chatham, Cape Cod. This is where my mother and her sisters also spent their summers, and even though my grandmother has since passed away, we will continue to travel to our favorite beach house year after year. I look forward to summer all winter long, dreaming about our wooden stairs in the backyard that leads to our private beach that is only shared with our closest summer neighbors. Within our Chatham house tradition, we have many other mini traditions that follow. One of my favorite parts of going to Chatham every year are the cinnamon rolls from Marian's Pie Shop which can be found right down the road from our house.

At any point in time I can remember waking up to the shining sun, the ocean breeze, and the smell of fresh Cinnamon Rolls made at the crack of dawn. My family is not the only ones who enjoy these rolls, they are very popular, unless you wake up bright and early at six am and travel down the road to retrieve the buns, they will be sold out till the next morning.

One year when I was about five years old, my mother decided it would be a good idea to go out for coffee and surprise the rest of the family with a fresh batch of warm, sticky cinnamon buns. My mother was reluctant enough to make it in time to the shop, before they were all gone, however she could only retrieve six of them, which is okay considering they are massive.

When my mother and I returned to the car, she realized she had forgotten what she has come out for in the first place, her coffee. Before she scurried back inside leaving me to man the car, she sternly warned me to keep my fingers out of the box. After she had disappeared into the shop, my stomach began to growl from the smell that was creeping out of the cracks of the box. Deciding that I didn't care what my mother had said, I maneuvered my way inside the box. I slowly but surely began to devour every single middle of all six cinnamon rolls. By the time I had realized what I had just done, it was too late to go back, so I carefully closed the box and licked my fingers, praying no one would find out I was the culprit.

Pulling back into the driveway made of seashells, I jumped out of the car and ran to the beach. Apparently no one was mad about the middles missing, even though that was everyone's favorite part, and it was obviously mine too. I guess my family had found the incident to be funny and cute, instead of greedy and selfish. To this day we still continue to buy the cinnamon rolls, and every time we do, all my cousins and aunts and especially my mom tease me about the middles. They always ask me in a teasing voice if I would like to have their middle, and my face always turns beat red while my answer is always no.

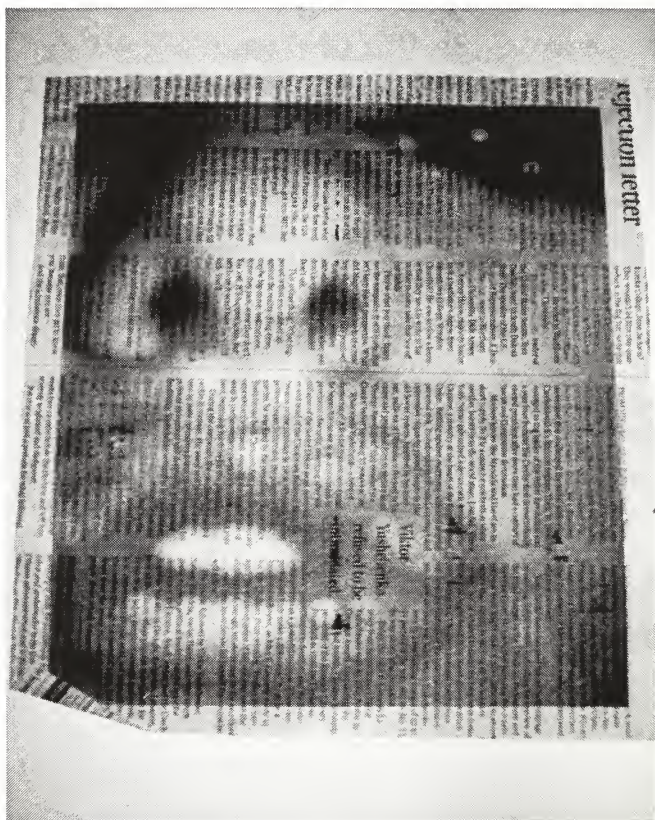
It's family traditions like these that bring a smile to my face and I believe this story will be told over and over for generations to come, not because my family is trying to embarrass me but because they love me.



Photograph by Emily Wilson

“Lost Girl”
Franchisca E. Jean

Stupid Girl
That never said a word
People think that she so dumb
When teacher ask question
Her head go down
Knowing that her answer
Will be so so dumb
Nobody to talk to
So she end up all alone
To the point that she can't take it anymore
Went to the Pawn and bought a big old gun
Put it in her throat and never live no more



Artwork by Siobhan Haskins

"Addicted to Being Paid"

Melquis Valdera

Since I was little I was a very curious and disorderly child. Never like to do what was told and always had to find out what would happen if I didn't do what is said. Constantly I was finding myself in trouble and most of the times it was only for fun that I did what I did or just to do it. I grew up with my mother and my two sisters who were older than me. My sisters were my biggest influences, since they were older I always wanted to do everything they did no matter what it was. Since my dad was barely in my life I never had a male influence, so I only went from what my mom told me. But I always went around her just because I knew my sisters did and they will get away with that.

As I grew I understood more and more about life and how it revolved. Basically money went into mind; all my thoughts went into that and how to get it. I was determined to accomplish my goals and it was to make as much money as I wanted and that was all. Nothing was going to stop me, nothing got in my way. I was so addicted to being paid I lost a lot of friends and family started to look at me wrong because they knew I didn't work as much as they did and had more money than them. It all started with my sisters' boyfriends and how they got their money, they were two brothers that ran a drug smuggling group that transported drugs across the U.S. As I chilled with them more I learned slowly how everything worked. One day I asked him to recruit me, I wanted to work and make money. I was doing this behind my sisters so they wouldn't know and snitch to Mom. Months went by and I just did run for run and drop off after drop off. Met new people everyday and me being the youngest one they worked with everyone thought I was a punk. I showed them I was capable of doing the job and keeping everything clean as in with no look outs. Since no one expected a 15 year old dealing Crack Cocaine and Ecstasy it was hard to get caught. But as they say when you're in it, it's hard to get out because you always want more than what you have but I learned that afterwards. I started dealing for money then it went up to doing robberies and stealing cars and stripping them for money. I was really living it big at the age of 16 going on 17, had a Honda with all the modifications possible, had the bling, had the clothes and to top it off had all the females' attention.

It all crashed down on me when I was surrounded at my aunt's house with about 6 police cruisers, 3 detectives and search dogs everywhere. I immediately thought to myself here goes everything especially my mom because she meant a great deal to me and depended on me so much. I was arrested with three of my boys and charged with crazy counts of receiving stolen property, two counts of Stolen Automobiles (which were in the back of the house stripped), burglar tools, No Trespassing, Possession of drugs and other charges that went along.

After doing 2 years, I believe that I learned my lesson not to be a follower and to be responsible with my life and not let a silly thing like money change that it over. Money comes and goes but family and friends will be forever. I changed my whole life around, went back to high school and graduated from Boston Latin Academy and am now trying to continue my career at Fisher College to earn the amounts of money I earned the right way.

Two Years Later, Two Years Ago
Emily (Cheng Leong)

My alarm clock wakes my lazy eyes up at 7 o'clock in the morning, but I am still in my dream. I take five minutes to get out of bed. Looking at the mirror, my eyes look very tired and sleepy; my mind is still thinking about the dream. After fifteen minutes, I run down quickly to catch the train. At the moment, my brain finally leaves the dream away and sends me a message: "I will be late." On the train, I close my eyes again; I think about why I am on this train or not on the bus; why I wear the dress not the school uniform. Two years later, will I still take the B-line? I don't know. For instance, two years ago, I could not imagine that I would take the B-line train to Fisher College. I don't know what will be in the future; everything that we now think is good or bad for us, maybe a year later or more, we won't have the same feelings as now. Time can not turn back on anyone; everything will be memories.

It was two years ago, at the end of July, when a different alarm clock woke me up at the same time in the morning. I hadn't slept well that night, but I was full of energy. It was the last day of school; it also was my last day of high school. I wore a tidy, clean school uniform that my mother had ironed the night. Actually, I did not like this uniform very much, I was happy that I did not need to wear it anymore. I walked slowly but happily to the bus stop. After a thirty-minute bus ride, I entered the school grounds through a side gate. I saw one of my computer teachers driving his car into the small parking lot on my left side. Some students were sitting under the trees, just hanging out there. I crossed the basketball field and entered my school building. My school has three buildings and the walls are pink. Two of the buildings were new at that time. Each stood on one side of the oldest building, and each was five floors high. The old building was in the middle. Just three floors high, it has been built 100 years ago. My classroom was on the top floor, the third floor. It was also the smallest classroom in this school. I thought after that day, I would be in a big college or university with many students in big classrooms. I didn't know that, a year later, I would go to a college that was smaller than my high school.

When I arrived at my classroom, I already saw my class teacher standing in front of the blackboard. Mr. Wilson Leng was my class teacher and math teacher in my last year of high school. He was a fat, tall man with short, thinning hair, and wearing the black-framed glasses, and he always wore a similar shirt and pants, but in different colors. He was so nice, kind and liked to play with the students, so we could talk about anything with him. Actually, to me, he looked like a panda, and in my imagination, I played with him in an animal garden. But sometimes, when we did something to get him mad, he would be like a black bear coming from the dark. When I sat in my seat, I forget what he had talked about with me, but I remembered that I enjoyed that conversation with him. I thought I would come back later to visit him some day. At that time, I didn't know that I would come back to this school and ask him for a letter of reference a year later.

The school was ready to begin celebrating the last day of school, so my class teacher lead us down to the auditorium. I sat there and pretended I was listening to my high-school president give his speech. I had heard his speech for six years at the same place and same day and same season. I can not remember anything about the speech, even though that day was the last day in the auditorium to listen to him. The school president was as tall as Mr. Leng, but had longer hair and was thinner. He wore iron-framed glasses. During those six years, when he was on stage, I always saw that he wore the same white and yellow shirt with a red tie and gray pants. Anyway, I clapped my hands quickly and loudly after he finished his speech. I didn't think he would remember me, but one year later, he had to figure out who I was in order to write a letter of reference for me.

When the farewell show drew to a close, we stood up and one by one went toward the stage. We waited on the backstage. When my teacher called me, I walked up the stage and walked toward the center. All the students were silent, so I was so nervous. My heart beat so fast; my hands and legs were shaking. I took a diploma from the president's hands, then I bowed in front of all the students and teachers, and I heard applause fill the auditorium. I had a big smile on my face. At that moment, my mind was full of happiness. I thought, four years later when I graduate from college, I will have the same feeling. One year later, that feeling came again when I found out that I got my visa.

At the end of the farewell show, all of the 12th grade students were on the stage preparing to sing our graduation song. Actually, the song was copied from some Hong Kong singer's song; we made up some great lyrics for the song. The song was all about the school, the teachers and students, and friendship. I was in the front row of chorus. One of my closest friends stood to my left side. Her English name was Penny. Penny was a tall girl with long straight hair, tan skin, and a pretty good body. She was planning to go to the same university with me in China and be my roommate. I could hear her singing; she sang aloud with smooth words. When we were in the middle part of the song, her voice became quieter, not as loud as at the beginning, but I still kept my voice in time with the music. At the end of the song, I knew she was crying because I could hear the interrupted words and crying sounds from her mouth. I guess it was the first time I saw her cry; she said it would be the last time too. I believed it until I told her that I got a visa to go to America in an excited and loud voice.

I remember after the celebration, we went back to our classroom with our crazy emotions, I did not cry because I wanted to be pretty in the school photograph. I played with my friends, talked to my teachers, and took the class photo with them. That was the last day I sat in a classroom, walked through the halls, and played inside the school. Then it came time to leave. I walked out the same way that I came in that morning. As I passed the parking lot, the side gate became bigger and bigger in my eyes. I had been in this school for six years, but at that moment, the memories of high school just had a few minutes. I should have stayed there for a couple of hours or more to make my memories bigger, but I didn't. I crossed through the gate without any regret; I said good bye to my teachers with my happy voice; I did not look back. I did not realize that I would miss my high school. I came back here a year later; I entered through the same gate, looked at the same parking lot, basketball and volleyball field. When the students were passing me, I knew I missed this place so much.

As I walked through the gate on my graduation day, the school became smaller and smaller behind my back. I was going to have lunch with my best friend, whose nickname is Cheese. She had medium-length hair, small eyes with big glasses; everyone said she looked like a grade-school student. On the street, I said loudly, "I am not a high-school student anymore!" She replied loudly, "Yep no more school! Finally, I can make some money." Cheese did not go to any college; instead she got a job in a casino. She told me that she would use her salary to buy everything that she wanted and did not have to ask her parents to give her any pocket money. I told her that I was going to live in a dormitory with Penny; I would play with my friends until midnight; my parents would not know and get mad at me that I came back to the dorm late; that would be so good. Did I think those things were good? At that time, I would have definitely said, "Yes" because I really wanted to be independent: leave my parents, take care of myself, have my own ideas, decide which road that I should follow. But for now, I was standing and facing two roads to different places, and no one could give me a correct answer or good advice. That frightened me; if I chose wrong, I would take all responsibility.

Two years have passed, and I am on the train in Boston with a lot of strange people. I have to wake up by myself; my parents don't give me a ride if I'm late. When I look at my watch, it is almost 9 o'clock in the morning. I will be late again. If I could turn back time, I would wake up early and be in class on time, I would go to bed earlier and get enough sleep at night. Of course, I know that is not possible. If time could be turned back, I wish it could be my last day of high school again. I would pay attention to my president's speech and make him remember who I am; I would cry while singing the graduation song, even though I know the school photographs would be no good; I would stay at my school a little long; when I left the school, I would turn back and look around; I would tell my best friend, "High school was a happy time." Anyway, I have to face the truth, try my best to make my life happy and enjoy it. Maybe, two years from now, I will be glad that I am not a kid anymore; I can choose a road by myself.

Untitled
Karissa Halloran

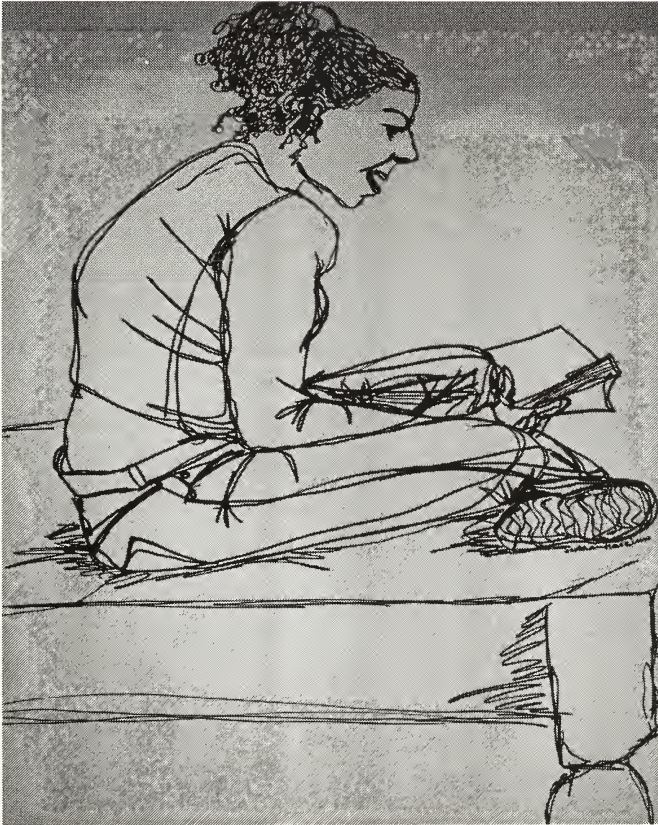
I believe in laughing. I believe that smiling will make you a happier person. Laughing with friends makes the day go by better. Laughing at your self is therapeutic. I believe in laughing as much as you breathe. I believe in not letting anyone take your happiness or humor away from you. You shouldn't laugh at someone if it's going to make them feel bad. If someone laughs at you, don't feel bad. Laugh until your stomach hurts and tears run down your face. Make as many people as you can smile. Smile at someone you don't know. Laugh out loud to yourself. People say laughter relives stress, is the best form of exercise, and puts a smile on people's faces. So what's the harm in laughing once in awhile?



Photography by Emily Wilson

"Problem Child"
Franchisca E. Jean

Linda was a very young child
Ended up with a child
Got rape numerous time
With no one around
Linda killed her child
Until help finally arrived
But could not save the child
Leaving Linda paralyzed
Because she was trying to commit suicide.



Artwork by Siobhan Haskins

Half a Fight Joseph Jean Baptiste

In sixth grade I entered my first public school, the Solomon Lewenburg Middle School. On a random day as a sixth grader, I was tested, not by the teacher, but by a student named Lonny. Lonny was not the typical class bully. He was more of a class showoff. I sat in front of Lonny in English class. He was almost twice my size and breathed as if he had a bad case of asthma. His neck was almost invisible due to the fact that his chest was enormous. He was out of shape and very much obese.

One day Lonny said, "Pick that up, yo." This was Lonny's respectful way of asking me to grab his pencil, after dropping it off the front of his desk. I picked up the pencil and handed it to him. "Oops, yo, get that again." No thank you and no please. Not thinking that he was purposely dropping his pencil, I grabbed it. Shortly after I grabbed it, I heard a giggle from his sidekick "Robin" or as his mother named him Terrence.

I paid no mind to them and continued day dreaming about cartoons. The teacher was in her own world and didn't even notice what had just happened. "Pick that up and sharpen it" were the next words I heard come out of this kid's mouth. My heart was telling me, "Don't take that. If you do it, you'll be his bitch for life." My brain was telling me, "Just do it and get it over with," and my pride was saying, "Punch this kid in the mouth," and my gut is saying, "These butterflies weren't here a second ago."

I knew that the next thing I did would be crucial. I started to sweat as my heart beat one-hundred miles an hour. My feet became numb and my hands shook as if they had automatic vibrators attached to them. Everything in the room was going in slow motion, the dumb teacher completely ignoring the fact that she should save my life at this point by telling him to stop messing with me. I began thinking maybe she wanted to see a fight as well.

So this was it my heard won. I told Lonny, “No, man, *you* pick it up. I’m not your slave.” He looked at me and smiled evilly that’s when I knew I was in for it. I had said it loud enough so I could grab the teacher’s attention, but instead every student in the class looked up, causing Lonny to feel as if he needed to respond.

I then grabbed my pencil and ran to sharpen it, in yet another hidden cry for help. Lonny got up, grabbed his pencil and headed right to the sharpener. My chest felt as if my heart was knocking and no one would open the door. I knew if I told the teacher straight up, I’d be the class punk who was also the informant.

He looked at me. I looked at the pencil sharpener as if it were a million dollar bill. His breathing got heavier and heavier behind my already sweaty neck. “Here,” he said “sharpen this.” By this time, it felt as if the audience had popcorn and nachos as they waited to see the outcome. The teacher sat at her desk as if she were a substitute.

“No, what don’t you understand, you dick?” Whoa, what the hell did I just say? Where did that come from? This is what I thought as this semi-truck stared me down. “Say I won’t,” he whispered viciously lifting his 30 pound fist. “Hello teacher, teacher, this is your cue,” my mind screamed. So I said “You won’t.” Wow, he did it. Lonny hit me right in my big mouth. “What now?” I thought.

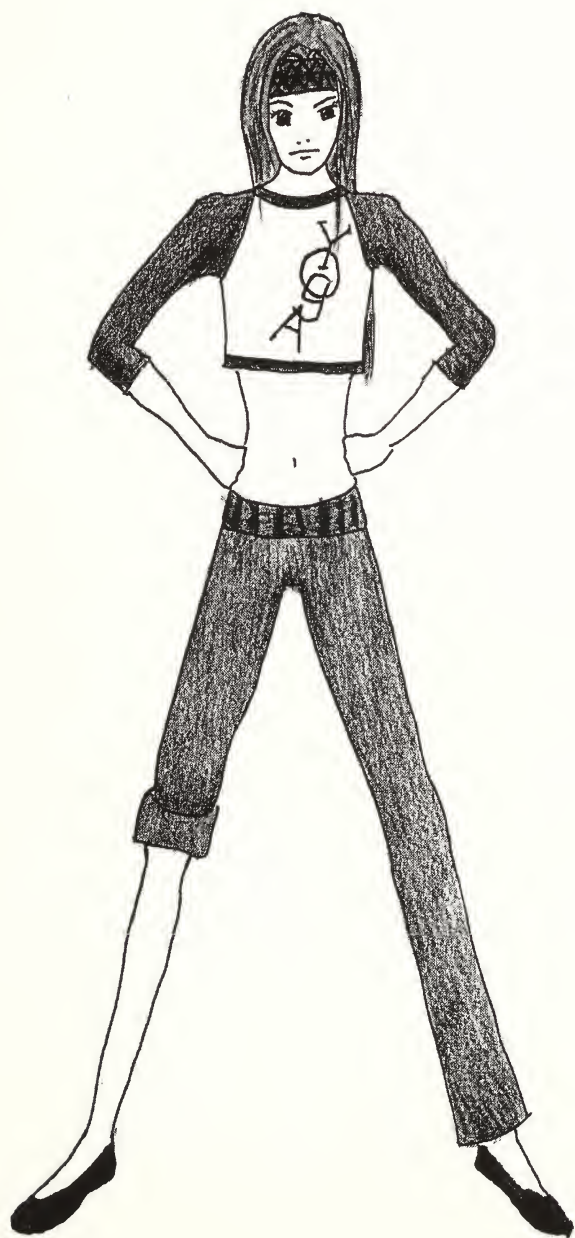
The punch didn’t hurt at all. There are only two ways to justify the fact it didn’t hurt. One, the adrenaline was pumping so hard that it caused my senses for pain to default, or two his fingers were so fat and gushy they really couldn’t do any damage.

I put up my fist and pulled back ready to lay one on him. All I could think of was the beating I was going to get when I got home. The time had come to make a name for myself.

“YOU TWO CUT IT OUT BEFORE I SEND YOU TO THE OFFICE.” “Sorry about that,” answered Lonny to the clueless teacher, and just like that, it was over. Lonny won that “fight.” No one ever mentioned it at all.

Today that fight doesn't seem as big as I made it to be back then. Actually, I laugh when I tell that story. The last I heard Lonny is in jail and I'm in college. Who would have figured? I understand that life is more than petty fights. Today I only fight colds and parking tickets. As for this story, I'll always remember it as the day I got into half of a fight.

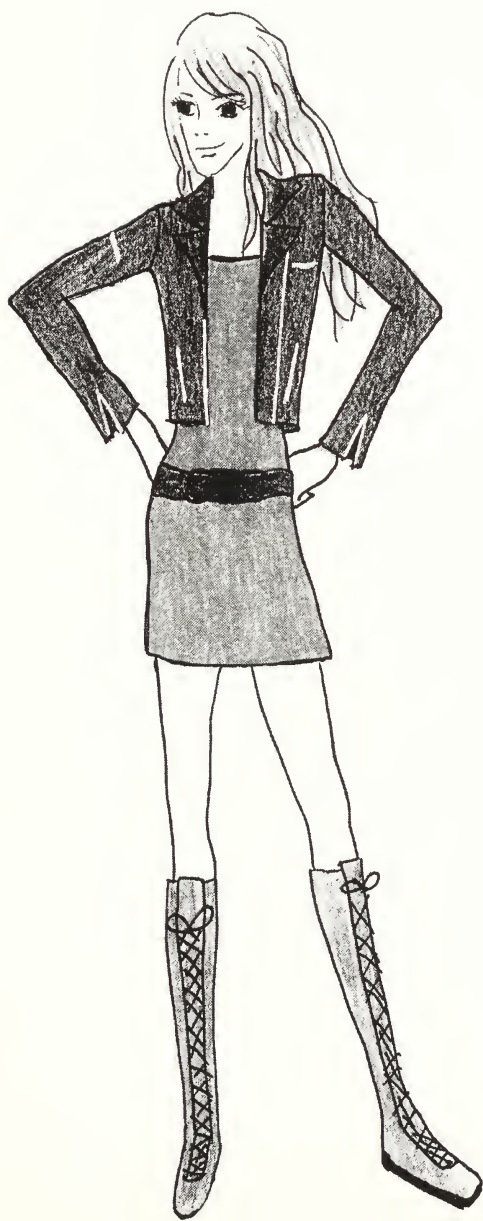
The Illustrations on the next few pages were done by Cheng Leong in the Fundamentals of Apparel Design course. Cheng is planning to begin Fashion Design courses next fall. .



cheng leang



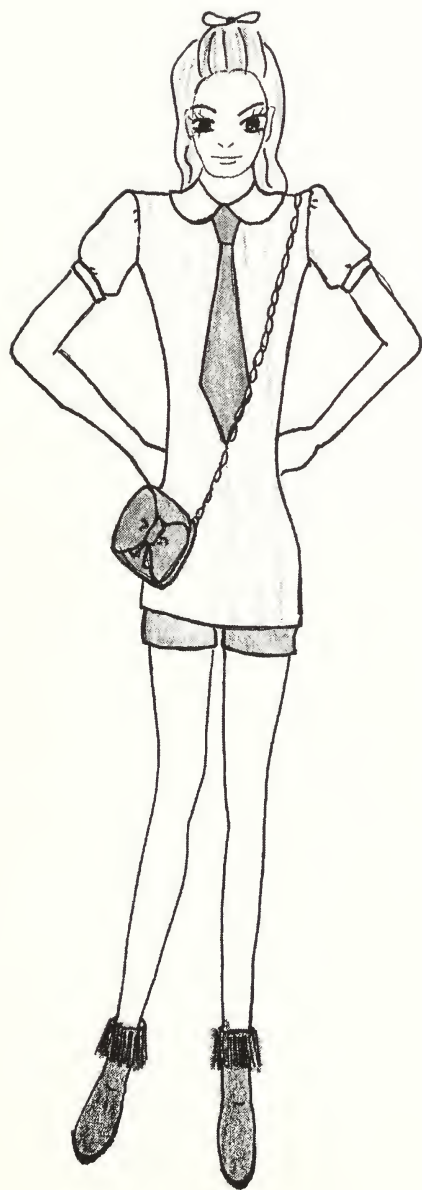
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